

Not So Merry Christmas

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Category: Halo
Genre: Hurt-Comfort, Romance
Language: English
Status: Completed
Published: 2011-12-24 13:16:55
Updated: 2011-12-24 13:16:55
Packaged: 2016-04-26 23:19:07
Rating: K+
Chapters: 1
Words: 917
Publisher: www.fanfiction.net
Summary: Epsilon's Christmas gift for Wash isn't well-received.

Not So Merry Christmas

****A/N:** Merry Christmas have some angst. My first attempt at anythingâ€| slashy. So let me know if I'm completely off the mark. I've been meaning to write some Church/Wash for a while (or, y'know, Epsilon/Wash) and this seemed like a good opportunity. This is not how I believe ****_**it**_**** happened, but I think I can get away with this.******

Wash's 'mind-world' (Epsilon couldn't remember who'd coined the term, but it had become pretty wide-spread) used to be fairly nice. Nothing really special, nothing too bright, just nice. Epsilon had appreciated it when he first arrived â€"it was kind of like a small-ish town, very grounded, good houses, cute gardens, etc.

But Epsilon â€"whether Wash chose to acknowledge it or not â€"had screwed everything up. Most of the buildings lay in ruins, the gardens were overgrown with weeds, and the sky, previously only occupied by those little puffy clouds that look so pretty in paintings, was perpetually on the edge of a downpour.

Epsilon approached his host's mental form. It almost physically hurt to look at; while Wash's physical body had changed very little (aside from the bags under his eyes caused by lack of sleep, and a slight hint of grey in his hair), this form showed the damage the damage Epsilon had caused. Wash's skin was pale and sallow, his hair with more than a little bit of grey, and the dark circles under his eyes made him looked like he'd been punched in the face twice by one of the more tank-like Freelancers.

"It's Christmas," Wash commented, attempting a weak smile. "And I didn't get you anything."

Epsilon nodded. If he'd had a real stomach, it would've dropped. He knew very well it was Christmas, and that had prompted him to act. But he knew his gift would get a mixed reaction at best.

He drew a deep breath. "I got you something. Kinda."

Wash raised an eyebrow, waiting for him to continue.

"I talked to the Director." Both of them stiffened at the name, suddenly caught in a maelstrom of memories â€"Alpha's memories. Torture, mostly: images of Allison, hurt or dead. Epsilon tore himself away from the past and continued. "I told him that â€"that what happened with Carolina and her AI is happening toâ€" us."

Wash stared at him before comprehension set in. "You _what_?"

"I proved it by having FILSS scan the most deteriorated parts of my programming â€"stuff no one could make sense of, so they still won't know we â€"_you _â€"know."

"Epsilon, they'll _delete_ you!" Wash yelled.

Epsilon paused. "I know."

Wash, uncharacteristically aggressive, put his face right in front of Epsilon's. "Why?" he hissed. "In what possible way could that make anything better?"

Epsilon gulped, far too aware of how close they were. "I â€"I," he fumbled. "The nightmares'll go away â€"you'll stop jumping at shadows andâ€" and flinching whenever you see another AI andâ€" "

Wash sighed and backed off a little, giving Epsilon a chance to remember how to breathe. "Ep, we've been over this," Wash said. He was right: they had been over this many, many times. "The stupid nightmares stopping aren't worth your deletion â€"your _death_."

"They're not stupid," Epsilon replied instantly. "It takes me a full thirty minutes to calm down â€"and calm you down â€"after those things. And we know we're keeping up a few of the others."

Ep was right. On more than one occasion, York, North, Maine or some combination of the three would come into his room to see what the damn screaming was about. Sig, D and Theta had all learned to stay offline during these times â€"they just set Wash off again. A few others would join from time to time (CT and South) but North, York and Maine were the usual.

"It doesn't make a difference, Epsilon," Wash snapped.

"Neither does this conversation," Epsilon retorted. "It's done. I'll be gone soon. I'll never bother you again."

"Ep, you've never bothered me," Wash said. "The nightmares â€" "

"â€"and the day-mares."

"And the day-mares," he reluctantly agreed, "are hell. But you

â€"you're a friend!"

Epsilon looked away, letting his dark hair cover most of his face, hiding the blush that had appeared when Wash said 'friend'. It wasn't what he wanted, but it was a far cry from the hate he had feared: Wash and Epsilon could still hide things from each other, even when more or less sharing a brain.

"Epâ€|" Wash sighed. He took a step closer, then two, and then lifted Epsilon's chin to make him meet Wash's eyes. Epsilon knew he was tearing up like a baby, but he couldn't stop it.

"Merry Christmas, Wash," Ep mumbled.

Knowing this was the last chance he'd ever get, Ep straightened â€"which, with their height difference, was just enough to make their lips meet. His reception was surprised â€"very surprised â€"but warm, and for the moment, Epsilon was content.

When the medics arrived to find Wash staring into the distance, an unconscious smile on his face, they decided it better to sedate him anyway.

And when he woke up, Ep was gone.

A/N: Does saying Wash's mind-world looks like a small town count as an insult? I didn't mean it to be.

End
file.